

The Calm One of Fatuhiva & FREDERICK O'BRIEN

AUTHOR OF "WHITE SHADOWS IN THE SOUTH SEAS"

TATTOOING, the marking of designs on the human skin in life, is an art so old that its beginnings are lost to records. It was practiced when the caveman went out to club his fellow and drag in his body to the fire his mate kept ever burning. Its origin, perhaps, was contemporaneous with vanity, and that was in the heart of man before he branched from the missing limb of evolution.

In the Marquesas Islands, that most distant and most mysterious of South Sea archipelagoes, tattooing reached its highest development, and there it was the most beautiful form of art known to the most perfect physical people of the world.

To achieve a fairly complete picture upon one's body meant many months of intense suffering, the expenditure of much wealth and a decade of years of very gradual progress toward the goal after manhood was attained; but for a man to lack the Stripes of Terror upon his face, to have a bare countenance, or one not yet marked by the initial strokes of the *hama* of the tattooer, was to be a poltroon and despised of his tribe.

Such a one must expect to have no apple of love thrown at him, to awaken no passion in womankind, nor ever to find a wife to bear him children. He was as the gniaur among the Turks. He had no honor

have often thought of the man most concerned in it.

We were seated, Puh Enata and I, upon the *paepae* of his home, the platform of huge stones on which all houses in the Land of the War Fleet are built.

In the humid air of that tropic parallel he made pass before me a panorama of fantastic tragedy as real as the mysterious life about me, but as astounding and as vivid in its facts and its narration as the recital of a drama of ancient Athens by a master of histrionics. I laughed or shuddered with the incidents of the story. He spoke in his native tongue and I have given his words as they filtered through the screen of my alien mind, not always exactly, but in consonance with the cast of thought of that faraway and unknown land.

"WE HAD no whites here when he came, this man of your islands. Other valleys had them, but Hanavave, no. Few ships have come to this bay.

sional stage and the salon of society.

"THE day he came to this beach," said the sorcerer, "was the day she first danced in the Grove of the Mei, at the annual gathering of the tribe. All the people of the ship were invited, and not least he who had no duties but his desires, and who brought from the vessel a barrel of rum as rich as the full moon, as strong as the surf in storm, and in every drop a dream of fortune. It made that foreigner of note at once, and he was given a seat at the *Harohura*, the Dance of Passion, in which Titihuti for the first time took her place as a woman and an equal of others. She was then thirteen years old, a *moi kanahau*, her form as the bud

and as the dance became faster she tossed it off, until she moved about quite nude. For this, of course, is part of the test. A hundred men, mostly young, stood and watched her, and watching them were the judges, the elders of the race, men and women. For, Menke, in the expression, the heat or the coolness of those standing men was counted the success or failure of the dancer. And they were taught by pride and by the rules of the event to conceal every feeling, as did the warrior who faced the launched spear. They were to be as the stones of the *paepae*.

"Tahiatini passed back into the trees and Moeo succeeded her. She seemed to feel that Tahiatini had not scored heavily. She danced marvellously for one who had never before been in the Grove of the Mei

breasts heaved, their limbs twitched and their eyes fell before her, her honor was as the winner of a battle. It was the supreme hour of a woman's existence.

"The judges seized the flambeaux and scrutinized closely the faces of the men. First one yielded and then another. Try as they might to be as the rocks of the High Place, they felt the heat and melted. A dozen were told off in the first few minutes of Titihuti's dance, though Tahiatini and Moeo had won but two or three. Faster grew the music and faster spun about her hips the torso

hiva. The foreigner sat and gazed, and when Titihuti glided to where he was and, planting her feet a *metere* away, addressed herself to him, he shook with longing. She was perfumed with the jasmine and about her breasts were rings of those pink orchids of the mountains. The foreigner felt the warmth of her presence as she posed in the attitudes of love. He bounded to his feet and clasping her for the second time to him, he shouted that he would be tattooed; he would be a man among men in the Marquesas.

"There was no delay; I myself tattooed him. As always the custom, I took him into the mountain, and built the *patiki*, the house for the rite. That is as it should be, for tattooing is of our gods and of our religion before the whites destroyed it. I was as I am the master of our arts. I did not sketch out my design upon his skin with burned bamboo as do some, but struck home the same ink directly. My needles were the bones of one whom I had slain an enemy of the Oi tribe. I myself gathered the candlenuts and, burning them to powder, mixed that with water and made my color. My mallet, or *hama*, was the shin of another whom I had eaten."

SUCH a man as Leonardo, who painted "Mona Lisa" and erected a hundred other beautiful things, or Cellini of the book and a vast creation of intricate marvels, would have understood the exactness of that art of tattooing in the Marquesas. Suppose "Mona Lisa" herself, an expanse of her fair back, and not mere linen, bore her picture. What infinite pains! Not more than took the *tapa* in such a task. In his mind his pain, he dipped his needle in the *ana* soot and, placing the point upon a pore of the flesh, he lightly tapped the other extremity of the bone with his *hama*. A flash and impressed the sepi into the living skin, for each point of flesh making a stroke.

Followed fever after several hours, of frightful anguish. The dentist is the minister of caresses, his the loved hand of pleasure, compared with the suffering caused to the quivering body by the blows of those needles. A scene of tattooing followed, and several days of sickness. He had not the strength of the natives in pain, and oft he cried out, but yet he signed that the tattooing should go on.

"Across his eyes, upon the lids, and from ear to ear I made a line as wide as two of your teeth, and I crossed lines as wide from the corners of his chin. As he was to be admitted to the Lodge of Tattooers, I put upon his brow the sacred shark as big as Titihuti's hand. I was four moons in all that, and all the time he must lie within his hut, never leaving it or speaking. I handed him food and nursed him between my work. Upon our darker skin the black candlenut ink is, as you know, as blue as the deep waters of the sea, but on him it was black as night for his flesh was white.

"He was handsome as ever god of war in the High Place, that foreigner, and terrible to behold. His eyes of blue in their black frames were as threatening as the thunders of the ocean, and above the black shark glistened his hair, as yellow as the sands of the shore. A breadfruit season had passed when we descended the mountain and he was received into the tribe of Hanavave. We called him Tokihi, for his splendid, though his name was Vilée, as we could say it."

THERE is a curious quibble in the recital of the Polynesian. He arrives at a crisis of his tale and avoids it—a piece of wit or an idle remark. Perhaps it is to

pique the listener's interest to deepen his attention, or it is but the etiquette of the bard.

"Titihuti?" I interposed.

"Tahiti!" he ejaculated. "You put weeds in my mouth. That girl, that Titihuti, had left her *paepae* and vanished. Some said she dwelt with a lover in another valley. Others that she had been captured at night by the men of Oi valley. It was always our effort to seize the women of other tribes. They made the race stronger. But Titihuti was not in Oi or with a lover. Her love was her beauty, and soon we learned that she was going into the hills herself to be tattooed. You, American, have seen her legs and know the full year she gave to those. They are even to-day the *hana matai oko*, the loveliest and most perfect of all living things."

"And Vilée, the splendid Tokihi, what said he?"

"Aye!" He dashed up and down the valleys seeking her. He offered gifts for her return. He cried and drank. But the tattooing is tabu, and it would have been death to enter the hut where she was against the wish of the artist. Then he turned on me and cursed me, and then he sat and looked at himself in the pool in the brook by his own *paepae*. That foreigner lost his good heart. No longer was he kind and gentle. It was he who led us against the valley of Omoa and with his un wrought great harm to those people. It was he who was ready to eat at but the drop of a coconut upon his roof. He took no women, and he became the fiercest man of Hanavave. When the year had gone and Titihuti came back he would not see her in the dance, though in it she showed her decorated legs for the first time. He cursed her, too, and said she was a sister of the *feiki*, the devilish. He dwelt among us for several years as one who leads the tribe, but is not of it. Often he missed death by the breadth of a grain of sand, for he flung himself in the snare; he fought the sea when it was angered, and he drank each night of the *raion*, the wine of the coconut flower grown old, until he reeled to his mat as a canoe tossing at the fishing.

THEN one day came a canoe from Tahiti, with words on paper for him from his own people. A ship from his island was there and had sent on the paper. That was a day to remember. There were the paper *tohi*, those faces of people you make on paper. Vilée seized those things and, running to his *paepae*, he sat him down and began to look them over. He read the words, and he put the tiki to his lips. Then he lay down upon his mat and wept. For much time he was like a child. He rolled about as if he had been drunk in the body with a war club, and at last he called me. I went to him with a shell of *namu*.

"Drink," I said. "It will lift you up."

"He knocked the shell from my hand.

"I will drink no more," he cried. "My father is dead, and my brother. I am the chief of my tribe. I have land and houses and everything good in my own island, but, alas! I have this."

"He pointed to the black shark upon his forehead. And then he shouted out harsh words in his own language. I left him, for he was like one from whom the spirit has gone, but who still lives. I thought of the strangeness of tribes. In ours he was a noble and honored man for that shark, and yet in his own as hateful as the barefaced man here. Man is as the wind cloud, out a shifting vapor.

"Often, a hundred times, I saw him sitting by the pool and gazing into it as though to wash out by his glances the marks on his countenance. He was as deep in the mire of despair as the victim awaiting the oven. Nature's mirror showed him why he could not leave for his land and his chieftaincy. And, American, for a woman, too, I saw him many times look at that *tiki* and read the words. Maybe he had fled from her in anger. Now he was great among his people, and she called him. Maybe. My own heart

was heavy for him when he fixed his eyes on that still water.

"AFTER weeks of melancholy he summoned me one day.

"Tahiti," he said, "is there no magic, no other ink, no bones, that will quit me of this?"

"He swept his hand over his face. "I will give you my gun, my canoe, my coats, and I will send you by the ship barrels of rum and many things of wonder."

"He took my hand, and the tears followed the lines of tattooing down his cheeks.

"Tokihi," I replied, "no man in the Marquesas has ever wanted to take from his skin that which has made him great to his race, yet there is a legend that wanders through my stomach. I will consult the lodge. It would be magic, and it may be tabu."

The next day I found him lying on his *paepae*, his face down. He was a leaf that slowly withers.

"Vilée," I said and rubbed his back, "there is for you perhaps happiness yet. I have talked with the wise old men of the lodge."

"He raised himself and fixed his dull eyes on me.

"One Kihiputona says that the milk of a woman will work the magic. I cannot say, for it is with the gods."

"The foreigner sprang to his feet. "Come! let us lose no time!" he cried. "It is that or the *eva*!"

"Marquesans, when tired of life, eat the *eva* fruit. I made all ready, and, taking my daughter and her babe, with food and the things of the tattooing, we again went to the hut in the mountains. Together we built it over, and made all ready for the trial.

"Remember, foreigner," I said, "this is all before the *Etua*, the rulers of each one's good and evil. I have never done this, nor even the wisest of us has sought but a faint memory of a memory that once a white man thus was freed to go back to his kin."

"E *aha e*—no matter," he said. "There is no choice. Begin!"

"I warned him not to utter a word until I released the tabu. I made all ready. Then I had him lie down, his head fixed in a bamboo section, and I began the long task."

THE sorcerer sighed and spat through his fingers.

"Two moons he was there, silent. I worked faster than before, because I had no designs to make.

Only traced those of the years before. But the suffering was even greater, and when I struck the bone needles upon his eyelid he groaned through his closed mouth. Every day I worked as long as he could endure. Sometimes he all but died away, but the *oni-oni*, the rubbing, made him again aware, and as I went on I gained hope myself. His own skin was by nature as that of the white archid, and the weeks in the *patiki*, out of the sunlight, with the oil and the saffron, made it as when he was a child. The milk was driven into the thousand little holes in the flesh, and by magic it changed the black of *ana* to white. I think some wonder made it do so, but you should know such things. I left the shark until the last, but long before I came to it the gods had spoken. Faded slowly the candlenut soot and crept out as the silver fish in the caves of Hana Hevane, the bright color of that foreigner.

"Many times his eyes, when I let loose the lid, lifted to mine in inquiry, but I was without answer. Yet nearer I felt the day when I would possess that rum and canoe and the barrels of rum.

"It came. A week had gone since I had touched with the needles his face, and most of it he had slept. Now he was round with sleep and food, and one morning when he awoke I seized him by the hand and said, "*Kooha*!" The tabu was ended; the task was done."

"And he?" I said greedily.

"He was as a man who wakes from a dream of horror. He said not a word, but went with me and my daughter and the babe down the trail to this village. Here he stole

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(Continued on next page)

—THOMAS JEFFERSON MACHAMER—

in life or death, no foothold in the ranks of the warriors or place among the shades of Po.

So when white men were cast by shipwreck in these wondrous isles of the far Pacific, or fled from day on whalers or warships and sought to stay among the Marquesans, they acceded to the honored customs of their hosts and adopted their facial adornment, and often, in the course of years, their whole bizarre garb. The courage that did not shrink from dwelling among cannibals could not wilt at the blow of the *hama*.

The explorer in the Far North who lets his face become covered with a great growth of hair, when he intends to return to civilization can, with a few strokes of a razor, be again as before. But once the curious ink of the tattooer has bitten into the skin it is there forever. It is like the pits of smallpox; it can never be erased. Through all his life and into the grave itself the human canvas must bear the pictures painted by the artist of the needles. It was a chain as strong as steel riveted on him that fastened him to those lotus isles. So men of America or Europe did not return to their native land from the Marquesas, but died there. The whorls and lines in the *ama dye* write exile forever from the loved ones at home.

IS THAT wholly true? Had not science or sorcery nepenthe for the afflicted by such a horror—horror if unwanted? Is there not one who has escaped such a fate when life had become fearful under it?

In the valley of Hanavave, in the Island of Fatuhiva, where I lived among the Marquesans, an aged tattooer, himself a sorcerer of power, told me the story. It is not mine, but his; and it has in it all the strange flavor of those exotic gardens of mystery. It is true, and I

"YOU ARE without ornament O Haeo. Cover your face as do Marquesan lovers, or get you back to your island!"

Taiohae, a day and a night and more distant, they sought for wood and water and now for *cepra*, but Hanavave was, as always, lived in by us only. Yet we ever welcomed the *haeo*, the stranger, for he had ways of interest and often magic greater than ours.

"He came one day on a ship from far, this white man I tell about and of whom even now I often meditate. He was not of the sea, but on the ship as one who pays to move about over the waters, looking for something of interest. That thing he found here. He brought ashore his guns and powder, his other possessions of wonder and let the ship go away without him. He had seen Titihuti, and his *koekoe*, his spirit, was set aflame."

I needed no description of the *haka* to bring before me Titihuti, to see that maddening, matchless child-woman, nor to know the desperate plight of a white who fell in love with her. She must have been the Helen of these Pacific Greeks, for men came from other islands to woo her, fought over her and embroiled tribes in bloody warfare at her whim. Her affairs had been the history of her valley for a brief period, and were immortalized in chants and in legends though she still lived. Many had related to me stories of her beauty, her spell over men and her wicked pleasure in deceiving them.

She was the daughter of a chief, of a long line of *hakaiki*, of noble mothers and of warriors and an adept in the marvelous cult of beauty, of sex expression, which to the Marquesan woman was the field of her dearest ambition, the profes-

of the *pahie* flower, her hair red cold, like the fish of the lagoon, and her skin as the fresh opened breadfruit. The Grove of the Mei you have been in, but you cannot imagine that scene. A hundred torches of candlenuts, strung on the spine of the palm leaf, lit the dancing mead. The grass had been cut to a smoothness and all the valley was there. As is usual in these annual feasts of our girls, at the height of the breadfruit season, a dozen were allowed to show their beauty and skill. These danced to the music of drums and of handclapping and chanting before the entire tribe seated on the grass."

The old man lit the pipe, which had gone out, and puffed out the blue clouds of smoke as if they were recollections of the past.

"Finally, as the custom is, the plaudits of the crowd narrowed the contest to three. Each as she danced appealed for approval, and each had followers. By the judgment of the throne all had retired but three after the first effort. These began the formal *titi e te epo*. This is the dance of love, the dance we Marquesans have ever made the test of the female's fascination.

"Before the first of the three danced the rum was passed. It was drunk from cups of leaves, and each in turn drew from the cask. It ran through our veins like fire through the pandanus. The great drum then sounded the call.

"TAHIATINI came from the shadow of the trees. She wore a dress of *tapa*, made from the pith of the mulberry tree,

and the shrewd judges reckoned more than one of the silent hundred who could not restrain some mark of approval. There was, when she fell back, a shout of praise from the crowd, and the judges conferred while the rum was handed about for the second time.

"THEN Titihuti was thrust out from the darkness, and from her first step we realized that a new enchantress had come to torment the warriors. I have lived long and many of those dances in the Grove of the Mei have I seen. Never before or since that I might have known a girl to do what he did. Her *haka* of *tapa* was as red as the sun when the sea swallows it and hung over one shoulder, so that her bosom, as white as the ripe coconut, gleamed in the light of the burning *ana*.

"Her hair was in two plaits of flame, and the glittering ghost flowers were over her ears. You know she had for months been out of the day and under the hands of those who prepare the dancers. Her body was as rounded as the silken bamboo and her skin shone with the gloss of ceaseless care.

"She advanced before the silent hundred, moving as the slow waters of the brook, and as she passed each one she looked into his eyes and challenged him, as the fighting man his enemy. Only she looked love and not hatred. Then she bounded into the center of the line and, casting off her *haka*, she stood before them, and for the first time bared her beautiful body as in the *titi e te epo*.

The Dance of the Naked. She flattered as a bird for a few moments, the bird that seeks a mate, the *kuku* of the valley. On her little saffron feet she ran about, and the light left her now in brilliancy and now in shadow. She was searching for his nose was naked. Weeks passed, but not his passion. He hovered about her as the great moth seeks the fireflies, but ever she was basted with her pomades and her massage, the *ana* urgent and the baths, the *oni-oni* and the combing of her red-gold tresses. She had set him aflame, but had no alleviation for him.

"AND then when the moon was at its height she danced again, this time alone, as the undisputed *vehine haka* of Fatuhiva. The judges caught the rhythm. They themselves were convulsed by the spell of the girl. The whole line of silent hundred was breaking when, as the breadfruit falls from the tree, suddenly sprang upon the mead the foreigner who had come but that day. Though others of the ship tried to hold him, he broke from them and, clasping Titihuti in his arms, declared that she was his and that he would defend his capture. The drums were quieted, the judges rushed to the pair, and for the time of a wave's lapping the beach spears were seized.

BUT the ritual of the rum began, and in the crush about the cask the judges awarded Titihuti the Orchid of the Bird the reward of the First Dancer. She stood in the light of the flow-dying torches, and when the foreigner would embrace her and lead her away she turned her laughing eyes toward him and called out so that many heard:

"You are without ornament, O Haeo. Cover your face as do Marquesan lovers or get back to your island!"

"Then she hurried away to receive the praise and to taste the glory of her achievement among her own family."

THE *Tapa* took his long knife and, with repeated blows, hacked off the upper half of a coconut to make ready another drink. I had a very vivid idea of the situation he had described. That handsome young man of European, belike of wealth, seeking to surrender to his vagrant fancies in this contrasting environment, and finding that among these savages he had position only as his rum bought it with the men, and was without it at all among the women. One could fancy him all aflame after that dance of abandon, ready on the instant to yield to that deepest of all instincts and surprised, astounded almost unbelieving at his repulse. He might have learned that such repulse was not even in the manners of the Marquesans, but solely the whim of Titihuti the beginning of that career of whimsical passion and insouciance which carried her fame from island to island and fetched other proud whites from afar to know her favor. He himself had come a long way to be the unwitting victim of the most prankish girl and woman who ever danced a tribe to death and destruction, but who, without, was worth more than she who launched the thousand ships to batter Ilium's towers.

"And did he cover his face?" I demanded, hurrying to follow the windings of fate.

"E!" said the sorcerer. "He gained the friendship of chiefs. He let his ship sail away with but a paper with words to his tribe, and he stayed on. He hunted, he swam and he drank, but he could not touch his nose to the nose of Titihuti, for his nose was naked. Weeks passed, but not his passion. He hovered about her as the great moth seeks the fireflies, but ever she was basted with her pomades and her massage, the *ana* urgent and the baths, the *oni-oni* and the combing of her red-gold tresses. She had set him aflame, but had no alleviation for him.

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